Relaxation in economic sanctions against South Africa

†244. SHRI KAPIL VERMA:†

SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is Government's reaction to the reported decision of United States and some other countries to relax economic sanctions against South Africa for its policy of Apartheid;

(b) whether Government propose to follow the decision of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Committee to recommend to the member States not to relax the sanctions unless certain specific conditions are met by the South Africa Government; and

(c) whether Government would consult African National Congress before taking any decision in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI): (a) The Government shares the disappointment of Dr. Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) on the decision of the United States and some other countries to relax economic sanctions against South Africa. The ANC believes that the US decision was premature especially since a large number of political prisoners have still not been released and the South African Government has not yet taken effective measures to end the violence in black townships. We also feel that sanctions should not be relaxed at a time when there is no certainty of forward progress towards the convening of an All-Party Conference on the Constitutional future of South Africa.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Kapil Verma.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: I would like to know whether the hon. Minister has seen today's press reports about the South African President's announcement cancelling with immediate effect, the secret projects used for funding anti-ANC organisations like Inkatha and also demoting two ministers involved in covert activities and violence in Black towns. I want to know whether this development has changed the situation, sufficiently and if so, whether the Government of India will take any steps to have the negotiations restarted and break the deadlock and pave the way for an all-party Conference on the constitutional future of South Africa.

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: In response to the allegation that the South African Government had channelled funds to Inkatha which was destablising the ANC, and in response to reliable reports that the South African Security Agencies had directly participated in township massacre, the African National Congress had made the following demands, namely, the dismissal of the Law and Order Minister and the Defence Minister, Mr. Magnus Malan and the replacement of President, Mr. De Klerk's Government by an all-party interim Government. The first reaction of the South African Government was to try and justify the action in supporting Inkatha on the ground that by combating the sanctions campaign of the ANC, it was acting in the national interest. However, on 29 July, President De Klerk demoted the Law and Order Minister Mr. Adriaan Vlok and the powerful Defence Minister, Mr. Magnus Malan to minor ministerial posts. Mr. Malan has been made Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs with additional charge of Housing and Works, while Mr. Adriaan Vlok has been put in charge of prison as Minister for Correctional Services.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: I asked whether the Minister considered this situation to have improved sufficiently so that he might take a fresh initiative?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: This shows, on the contrary, the fear of Mr. Nelson Mandela—when the American Government lifted some of the sanctions—that it was premature and the sanctions

should not be lifted because the process for negotiations is filled with so many hurdles and this is one proof of it.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: I want to know whether, at the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference.—I think our Minister also attended it—the Commonwealth Secretary-General had announced that the Commonwealth Ministers would be sending a delegation to examine the European Economic Community and the United States which have relaxed the sanctions. Has it been sent or is it proposed to be sent? Because India is taking active part in it, what role are we playing in this? What is the stand of U.K. and Australia, who are both Members of the Commonwealth and, who are pleading for relaxation of sanctions?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: The first step in Commonwealth sanctions was the adoption of the Gleneagles Agreement on sporting contacts with the apatheid regime. Financial sanctions were imposed in 1986 and these were further strengthened in 1988 and 89. And, then, in the Vancouver Summit in 1987, the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on South Africa was set up. It consisted of 9 members and the objective of the Committee was to provide high-level guidance and impetus to the efforts of the Commonwealth to pressure South Africa to dismantle apartheid. This meeting had taken place and in its last meeting in February 1991, the Foreign Ministers recommended that it would be premature to review sanctions till further progress has been made on the release of political prisoners, the return of exiles, the dismantlement of repressive security legislation and the actual repeal of the Group Areas Act the Lands Act and the Population Registration Act. The Committee also recommended that trade, investment and financial sanctions should not be relaxed...till the Constitution-making process was formally established and that the arms embargo should not be lifted until the new Constitution was firmly in place. The delegation has not yet gone.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: What is the stand of U.K. and Australia?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: The stand of U. K. is well-known. U.K. is very much against sanctions except dealings in arms and weapons.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Can you not persuade them to change their stand?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: Even the former Prime Minister, late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, had many mettings in those days with Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the then Prime Minister of U. K. He tried to persuade them a number of times. Even today, our efforts are continuing.

SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether it is correct that the Foreign Ministers of the 12-nation European Community at a meeting held in Luxembourg in April agreed to lift EEC's economic sanctions on import of iron, steel and gold coins from South Africa, thereby rejecting an appeal by the African National Congress Secretary-General? I would also like to know whether it is true that the African National Congres Deputy President. Nelson Mandela, had warned that if the European Community decided to lift the sanctions too soon, his organisation may make the country so unstable that nobody would want to invest in South Africa? I would like to know from the Government whether they have any information about this decision of the European Community? What is the present position and what is the Government's reaction?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: Not only the European Community. In fact, despite the rhetoric about maintaining sanctions which still emanates from various international fora, the international consensus on this issue has eroded considerably over the past one year. A number of African countries now maintain relations and, in some cases even diplomatic relations with the Pretoria regime. These include Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Comorsos, Congo, Gabon, mauritius, Malawi, Mozzambique, Namibia, Senegal, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Madagascar

and Morocco, President De Klerk paid a visit to Kenya and now there are reports that he might visit Nigeria. Similarly, all East European countries have established diplomatic and/or commercial relations with Pretoria. Even the Soviet Union had opened an interest section in the Austrian Embassy in Pretoria. Similarly, most Western counties maintain full relations with South Africa. U.K. is in the forefront. Even the Nordic countries, Netherlands, Denmark and Switzerland, have decided to establish relations with South Africa. China also, on May 30, 1991, admitted to non-Governmental exchanges with Pretoria. Japan has decided to remove its economic sanctions against South Africa. Similarly, the European Community has decided to withdraw its sanctions package imposed on South Africa in 1986.

DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: What is our stand?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: I am giving information. What I am pointing out is that, in spite of the rhetoric, practically, most of the countries in the world—in Eastern Europe, in Western Europe, even Russia, China, Japan, Switzerland—have started establishing relations with South Africa.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister has given us a lot of information about the developments on this front which took place in the last one year. But I am afraid, he is confusing diplomatic relations with trade sanctions though, of course, it may eventually mean weakening of economic sanctions too.

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you in favour?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I am not in favour. My question is, what steps the Government of India propose to take to see that the economic sanctions are maintained vigorously, at least, by the Commonwealth countries? U.K. is a leading member of the Commonwealth and it played its role in weakening the will of the EEC in regard to economic sanctions. In what way does the Government of India propose to exert pressure on U.K. in this regard?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: Sir, as I have already stated, Government of India have always persuaded U.K. to fall in line with the rest of the Commonwealth countries, but U.K. has its own attitude. Rest of the countries have their sanctions against Africa. The Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Committee, which had laid down certain conditions for all the member countries, is meeting in Delhi very shortly to review the situation, particularly after DeKlerk, President of South Africa, has taken measures in line with the demand made by the African National Congress as well as the American Congress which had passed a law against aparthied. Several actions have been taken for dismantling aparthied and that is why this relaxation process has started.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Sir, we are all heartened at the changes that have taken place in South Africa in recent times. At the same time, we are equally pledged to fulfil Gandhiji's dream of complete elimination of aparthied. I am very happy that the hon. Minister has made a statement giving all moral and material support to ANC, so that we have a united and democratic South Africa bereft o fnay acal discrimination, but in view of the changed circumstances which he has mentioned, where the sanctions are getting eroded, has the Government thought of a new strategy by preparation of a new brief so that there is no further erosion and, in fact, the process of erosion of economic sanctions is reversed?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: Sir, the main issue is the African Government and African National Congress coming together to negotiate on the post-aparthied period, how to form a constituent assembly, how elections should take place, how there should be a government based on democracy and without race. Now, Sir, as per the demand

of the African National Congress and the support it got from many countries of the world, the African Government have taken some significant steps. As per the stipulation, Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners are released, and this happened after deKlerk came in 1989 as the President. African National Congress, South African Communist Party, Pan African and other anti-aparthied organisations, ban on them has been lifted. Army has been withdrawn from black townships. Media restrictions were lifted. Death penalty was suspended. State of emergency was lifted. Separate Amenities Act was repealed. And in 1991 the main pillars of aparthied, namely, Group Areas Act under which there was a residential segregation, Land Acts under which 87 per cent land was reserved for whites only and Population Registration Act which classifies citizens by race at birth, all have been repealed. On the basis of this the American President took the step to lift some of the sanctions though not all. With regard to arms sale, IMF and other loans, sanctions have not been lifted even by America.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, the Minister has just now said that President Bush has made announcement about partial withdrawal of the sanctions. He also, at the same time, made an announcement that the IMF sanctions would stay. I would like to know from the hon. Minister, since when the IMF has given authority to the U.S. President to make an announcement on behalf of the IMF. If that is so, what is our attitude towards this?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: I would not know how IMF gave the permission to President Bush, but President Bush acted upon his own law which was passed in 1986, the comprehensive Anti-aparthied Act enacted by the U.S. Congress under which there are four stipulations. No. 1, release of all political prisoners, No. 2, unbanning of political parties including anti-aparthied organisations. Repeal of the state of emergency, repeal of the Group Areas Act, and entering into negotiations by the South African Government with representatives of the Black majority.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Do they have the authority to speak on behalf of the IMF?

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: Sir, how can I say about the IMF?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Conversion of State Roads into National Highways in Tamil Nadu

*243. SHRI PASUMPON THA KIRUTTINAN:

SHRI T. R. BALU:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) what are the proposals from Tamil Nadu pending with the Government of India for conversion of State Roads into National Highways;

(b) the estimated cost of those proposals; and

(c) since when and at what stage are they pending and the reasons for the delay?